

Growing Plants You Can Eat

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Many times when landscaping, we forget that our plants can be grown for the food that they can produce. Right now is a great time to purchase and plant these trees and vines as bare root. You cannot produce a safer or healthier organic food product than fruits and berries off of your own trees and vines.

I know there are pundits out there that will tell you it is impossible to grow your own, but mark my words, it's easy and inexpensive, especially when you are going to use the plants and trees that are already part of your landscaping.

One of my favorite types of fruit is the blackberry. Blackberries do extremely well in the Valley, but you need to do a couple of things. The first is to pick the right types. Womack, Brazos and Brisons are the three types that do best here in the Valley.

Each has its own individual characteristics that may be superior to the other. You can get the full details in my book, "Extreme Gardening."

You must make sure to plant the blackberries in an area that gets afternoon shade and has plenty of room for the plants to spread. I have friends that actually grow these as an income crop.

Figs are another one of my favorite types of trees to grow. Black Mission and Conadria seem to thrive here in the Valley. Make sure to plant them in a warm, frost-free area.

Plant them where the roots receive plenty of water during the first few years, and make sure to keep a lot of compost around the base of the trees. This helps with its fertilizig needs and also retains the moisture.

Peach trees are normally short-lived, lasting from 10 to 15 years on average. These trees are increasingly easy to grow. A few varieties are Desert Gold, Babcock and

Florida Prince. Make sure to go with the types that require low chill hours to produce fruit. You also need to keep them relatively short so the tree can be covered with netting to keep the birds away from the fruit.

Some other types of trees easily grown in the Valley are:

- Apples -- Anna, Golden Dorsett, Einsheimer
- Apricots -- Gold Kist, Katy, Royal Rosa, Blenheim
- Plums -- Santa Rosa (best tree for the desert), Gulf Gold, Gulf Ruby
- Pomegranates -- Wonderful!
- Persimmons

Be sure to purchase the above named trees to get the best results. When purchasing these trees, keep in mind you need early-bearing, low-chill trees to have successful fruit-bearing trees.

"Extreme Gardening" can be picked up at most Walgreens, Borders and Walden Books in the Phoenix metro area.